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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 MAPUTO 000176

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [MZ](#)  
SUBJECT: MAJOR PARTIES REVEAL PLANS AND CONCERNS  
POST-ELECTION

REF: MAPUTO 175

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Classified By: Ambassador Leslie V. Rowe for reasons 1.4 (b+d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: On February 10, Electoral Institute of Southern Africa (EISA) country director Miguel de Brito told Emboffs that the October 2009 elections were the most irregular and frustrating yet in Mozambique. Challenges included unbalanced application of the law, "irregular" actions by the National Electoral Commission (CNE), and significant ballot spoiling by polling officials--comments corroborated by an EU Elections Observation report issued on February 16 (Ref A). Though FRELIMO won three-quarters of the vote, only 45% of eligible voters went to the polls, leading to increased concern in the ruling party about its popular support. De Brito believes that FRELIMO will make constitutional changes this year, but they will not likely include an alteration to the current presidential term limits of two consecutive terms, as FRELIMO continues to believe in the primacy of the party over the leader. On opposition politics, de Brito believes RENAMO is in shambles, while the Democratic Movement of Mozambique (MDM), with eight deputies in the National Assembly (AR), did quite well despite the CNE's large-scale pre-election disqualification of their legislative candidates. Separate discussions with party representatives confirmed that the ruling party is interested in expanding its relationship with the Mission. Among the main opposition parties, the mood in RENAMO is decidedly glum, contrasted by optimism in the MDM camp. With an increasingly dominant ruling party, continued donor community support for civil society will be necessary to preserve any democratic space in Mozambique for meaningful opposition politics. END SUMMARY.

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REVIEW OF THE "IRREGULAR" 2009 ELECTIONS  
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¶2. (C) Emboff, together with visiting Mozambique Desk Officer Joyce Namde, met with Miguel de Brito of the Electoral Institute of Southern Africa (EISA) on February 10 to review the October 2009 elections. De Brito, a seasoned and highly-respected political observer, said that the recent elections were the most irregular and frustrating yet in Mozambique because of the Electoral Commission's (CNE's) unbalanced application of the law. EISA, said de Brito, will release a final assessment of the elections in March focusing on CNE's shortcomings and large-scale partisan ballot spoiling, which occurred on a level not seen since 1999. An EU Election Observation Mission report released on February 15 cited many of these same concerns (Ref A).

13. (C) Responding to news that the Attorney General had filed criminal charges against 229 polling officials for willfully spoiling ballots, de Brito said that this was likely an effort to appease donors, however higher-ups who gave the orders to spoil opposition ballots would not likely be pursued. De Brito commented that without donor pressure, the Government of Mozambique (GRM) would not challenge the "irregular" actions of the CNE and polling officials.

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FRELIMO'S PLANS FOR THE FUTURE  
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14. (C) Turning to FRELIMO, de Brito noted that the ruling party, despite receiving 75% of the vote in the October elections, feared that it was losing support in Mozambique. Compared to the region, Mozambique's 45% voter-turnout percentage was meager at best, and FRELIMO is increasingly concerned that a majority of eligible voters chose not to vote at all. De Brito pointed out that the roughly 3 million votes cast in the 2009 election is only slightly more than the total number of members in the FRELIMO party.

15. (C) De Brito believes that, despite strong ties with the MPLA in Angola, a donor-dependent FRELIMO fears repercussions from the international community if Guebuza attempts to use the party's super-majority in the National Assembly (AR) to change the constitution to allow a third consecutive presidential term. He explained that FRELIMO is relatively thin-skinned when it comes to criticisms from donors, and that continued international pressure may force FRELIMO to look at making much-needed constitutional revisions this year, particularly in regards to the electoral law. Civil society needs donor support for this endeavor, in particular

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amending the way in which members of the CNE are appointed, said de Brito.

16. (C) While other southern African countries exhibit "strong man" politics, de Brito believes that FRELIMO still prefers the "strong party" model, and as such will block Guebuza from running for a third term. Also, de Brito believes that inside the party the Chissano and Graca Machel camps maintain sufficient strength to limit Guebuza's power. He believes that FRELIMO, a famously secretive organization, will show its cards as to who will be the presidential candidate in the next election cycle at the upcoming FRELIMO Congress, likely to take place in 2011 or 2012. He agreed that the different FRELIMO camps may agree on a compromise candidate, but had no speculation as to who that might be.

17. (C) In a subsequent and largely non-substantive meeting with FRELIMO's spokesman, Edson Macuacua--better known as a party stalwart than an insightful thinker--said that in the upcoming five-year term, the ruling party would work for better governance, improvements in the rule of law, transparency, and accountability. Macuacua bluntly delivered a message that there was great admiration for the United States and its people, but that critical comments by U.S. representatives were not appreciated. The spokesperson went on to say that FRELIMO looked forward to expanding its relationship with the Mission. Sticking largely to talking points elaborated on during President Guebuza's inauguration speech, Macuacua continued that FRELIMO wanted to lead a consolidation of democracy and peace in Mozambique, particularly in the political and economic areas, with an ultimate goal of combating poverty; while at the same time ensuring that there are three strong branches of government.

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RENAMO IN SHAMBLES  
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18. (C) On traditional opposition party RENAMO, de Brito opined that party members' recent decision to take their

seats in the AR against the orders of President Afonso Dhlakama represented the biggest challenge yet to the leader's authority. De Brito believes that if Dhlakama were to be replaced, which is unlikely, he would be replaced by someone of the same generation, possibly Victor Anselmo, a senior parliamentarian.

¶9. (C) On February 9, poloffs met with RENAMO parliamentarian Maria Ivone Soares who confirmed that the party is in shambles. Soares said that there was no formalized plan to protest the October 2009 fraudulent elections by not taking RENAMO seats in the AR, so party members decided against the wishes of Dhlakama to take their places, suggesting disappointment in the election results has led to dissension in the ranks. Discussing leadership, Soares acknowledged that there is no current plan for a Party Congress, the only mechanism RENAMO has to change leadership. She also noted that RENAMO no longer has a shadow government in place. Soares called for strong diplomatic action to bring attention to FRELIMO's total control of the three branches of the GRM. She expressed great frustration with the current bleak situation in the AR, saying that even over the past five years when RENAMO held 90 out of 250 seats, the opposition party was unable to pass any laws which it had authored.

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MDM ADOPTS A LONG-TERM PERSPECTIVE  
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¶10. (C) On February 9 emboffs met with Ismael Mussa, spokesperson for the Democratic Movement of Mozambique (MDM) and one of the party's eight representatives to the AR. Mussa explained that, although the newly formed party never expected to challenge for the presidency, it had high hopes of making a strong showing in the AR elections and was deeply disappointed by the CNE's questionable decision to disqualify its candidates in seven of 11 legislative districts. He described an internal party struggle between those who sought fierce, public protest and those who ultimately prevailed, including Mussa, who preferred to play a participatory role in the legislature, building toward the 2013 municipal and 2014 national elections. Mussa observed that FRELIMO appeared to have already adopted two planks from MDM's platform: a greater focus on affordable building materials and housing, and creating a 48-month loan program to permit

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educators to purchase computers.

¶11. (C) Mussa is married to an attorney and achieved some renown during his previous stint in the AR, as a RENAMO parliamentarian, for his knowledge of Mozambican constitutional law. He said MDM was both pleased and surprised by the party's strong appeal among urban voters and expected to tailor parts of its platform accordingly. For example, current Mozambican law does not permit direct popular action, such as a referendum, and lacks a conflict of interest provision. Among other possible projects, Mussa noted that MDM would like to see greater funding for public television and radio to ensure a truly independent media.

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COMMENT: KEY FOR DONORS TO PRESS DEMOCRACY  
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¶12. (C) De Brito's insights are revealing, particularly with regard to FRELIMO's concerns about voter confidence in and donor criticisms of the ruling party. FRELIMO hopes that it can rely on continued donor flows without having to respond to withering criticism on the democracy and governance front, suggesting that any backsliding on D&G by the donor community will lead FRELIMO to conclude that it need not respond to donor criticisms. De Brito's comments regarding the need for a unified front in support of civil

society to counterbalance the increasingly dominant ruling party are telling in that it appears that civil society is also under pressure to shelve its concerns about the election. The respective attitudes of RENAMO and MDM show the trajectories of the two opposition parties. RENAMO appears completely lost. Despite MDM's upbeat attitude, opposition politics in Mozambique remain incredibly weak. In the current five-year term, FRELIMO will likely continue to dominate the political landscape, particularly given its concerns about voter fidelity. Whether Guebuza will succumb to the temptations of a third term or be held in check by forces within his party has yet to be determined. The donor community has the challenging task of influencing FRELIMO to preserve a healthy democratic space in Mozambique for vibrant and relevant opposition politics.

ROWE